

Pre-K Teaching Times

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Phonological Awareness

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information also can be
found on the website.
www.decal.ga.gov

Play games with children that involve repetition of a series of sounds. For example: clap your hands three times and ask students to copy the sounds you make. In this case students should clap their hands three times. Tap a rhythm stick on the floor two times and wait for students to copy. Be creative and use a variety of sounds that children can repeat in sequence. Start with simple sounds and sequences, and then progress to more sounds and more difficult sequences, such as clap, clap, stomp.

As children develop critical listening skills, begin narrowing the focus from environmental sounds and words that are distinctly the same or different to speech sounds. Discriminating words that differ by just one sound is more difficult than identifying if the words pencil and dog are the same or different. For example, are these words the same or different? (Bob, job), (bog, log), (mob, mop)

Help students discriminate individual sounds. Start with sounds very different in the way they are produced inside the mouth such as “b” and “s;” then move to sounds produced similarly such as “p” and “b.” Let children practice producing the individual sounds so they can experience and explore how sounds feel on their lips, tongue or even in the back of their mouth. Cover your mouth with a piece of paper and make a sound such as “p” as children to repeat the sound. Then make produce two sounds “p,b” and ask children to repeat the sounds. Discuss how the sound was made with your lips, tongue, teeth, or in your throat. Talk about whether sounds are noisy or quiet.

For example: “p” is a quiet sound made by placing your lips together and then popping them apart but without using your voice. In contrast, “b” is made exactly the same way by placing your lips together and popping them apart, but you use your voice; therefore, “b” is a noisy sound. Many of the sounds in our alphabet can be compared and contrasted based on the way we produce them.

Look below; each pair of sounds is made exactly the same with regard to placement of lips, teeth or tongue; the only difference is that one is quiet (no voice) and the other is noisy (voice is used).

Quiet Sounds	Noisy Sounds	
P	B	Made by popping lips apart
T	D	Made by tapping the tongue behind the top teeth
K	G	Made by the back of the tongue scraping against the roof of the mouth
F	V	Made with top teeth on the bottom lip and gently blowing air
S	Z	Made by smiling and blowing air gently through teeth



Phonological Awareness, continued

How can I play with sounds? Start simple by asking children to repeat the sound you make. Tell them to watch your mouth because they can gain cues from placement of your articulators...your lips, tongue, and teeth. Then have them repeat short, simple sequences of sounds (p,p,p), (p,p,b), (t,t,t,d), p,b,p,b), (t,t,k), (p,t,k), (b,d,g). Make the sound sequences progressively more difficult as children's skills develop.

Some students initially may have difficulty distinguishing between two sounds. Remember, you are asking them to rely solely on auditory skills that are not fully developed at age four. Give them visual cues to help them feel successful. For example, use three cubes of the same color to visually show that (p,p,p) are the same sound. Then show that (p,t) are two different sounds, represented by two cubes of different colors. Sometimes that visual connection along with the auditory connection can make all the difference. Using colored cubes is easier than using the actual letters to represent the sounds because at this point it is more about distinguishing the sounds than identifying the letters. Letters can be added later after you are comfortable that they are distinguishing sounds that are the same and different.

The general sequence of listening or discrimination skills from a broad focus to a more narrow focus is:

Environmental sounds

Words that are the same or different and vary greatly in their production (dog, cookie)

Words that are the same or different, but vary by only one sound (dog, log)

Learning about how and where sounds are produced within the mouth.

Discrimination between two sounds that are the same or different.

Repeat sounds in a sequence.

Jazz Up Your Writing Center

As children explore your classroom, there are many exciting activities and materials with which they will interact; sometimes, it is easy for the writing center to become blah, ho-hum, and go unnoticed and unused. A small table, a couple of chairs, and a shelving unit to store materials for easy access is all that is needed to create a writing center in your classroom. It is great to establish this writing area near your reading area, well away from the noise of blocks and dramatic play.

To make your writing area more appealing to children, it is important to keep it supplied with a variety of materials. While you may want to purchase some necessary items, the writing center can easily be stocked with real and found materials that parents donate. Items like old greeting cards, pocket calendars, different sized envelopes, used postage stamps that have been cut off envelopes, memo pads, sticky notes, and many other items can easily be collected.

Once you have established your class writing area and have introduced the materials housed there during small group time, here are other ideas and materials to help keep your writing center fresh and irresistible:

Jazz Up Your Writing Center, continued

Various Types of Paper: Include both lined and unlined paper (be sure to include primary ruled paper that will be used in kindergarten). Provide notepads and decorative paper as the seasons and holidays change. These are available inexpensively at many dollar stores. Include greeting cards and other types of stationery. Provide small blank books by folding and stapling blank pieces of paper together.

Various Writing Implements: Provide a choice of fat and skinny pencils (purchase inexpensive seasonal pencils at the dollar store), ball point pens, colored pencils, fat and skinny crayons, scented crayons, fat and skinny markers, funny light-up pens, or bejeweled or decorated pencils or pens. Rotate your writing implements monthly; children love to try new writing tools.

Alphabet Paper Punches: Students can punch the letters of their names, friends' names, or words and glue them to paper.

Sandpaper Letters: Place skinned crayons and half sheets of paper with these. Students can create crayon rubbings of the letters.

Alphabet Stamps: Keep alphabet stamps organized by storing them in ice cube trays or egg cartons. Label each empty space with a letter and the students can match the stamps to the correct space. The students enjoy stamping their names or other words.

Write and Wipe Placemats: You can often find these at local department stores very inexpensively. Many times these materials feature motivational TV characters like, Bob the Builder, Dora the Explorer or seasonal themes.

Word Rings: Punch holes in word cards that have both a picture and the word written on them; place the cards on metal rings and hang them within easy reach in the writing center. Categorize the word cards on individual rings (e.g. color words, number words, family words, etc.) A new set of vocabulary/picture words supportive of the current theme of study is an easy change for your writing center. Don't forget to include name cards with students' pictures on them in the writing area.

Scented and Fun Shaped Erasers: These are sure to be a giant hit and are an easy and inexpensive change. Many seasonally shaped erasers are always available at the local dollar store.

Magna Doodle, Aqua Doodle, Chalk Boards, and Wipe Off Boards: These additions provide a plethora of writing experiences that differ from those resulting from using paper, pencil, or crayon. Routinely rotate these materials into the writing center to keep the area fresh and interesting to the children.

Alphabet Books: Collect a variety of alphabet books to rotate throughout the year (e.g. *Farm Alphabet Book* by Jane Martin, *The Z Was Zapped* by Chris Van Allsburg, *Old Black Fly* by Jim Aylesworth and Steven Gammell, *Eating the Alphabet: Fruit and Vegetables For A to Z* by Lois Ehlert, *LMNO Peas* by Keith Baker, etc.)

Materials to Introduce the Alphabetic Principle: Include magnetic letters for both upper and lower case letters. Cookie sheets make inexpensive magnetic boards for letters.

Collect and rotate various sets of letters made from wood, sand paper, or felt. Include stencils and word cards that feature words the children frequently ask to be spelled. If you have a word wall, assure it is at eye level and close enough to your writing center so that children can easily see it when copying words.

While this list is not inclusive, you can be assured that provision of many of these materials in a well-stocked and refreshed writing center will create a beautiful melody of learning for your children! For more information about suggested writing center materials, refer to the Bright from the Start webpage and click on Creating a Quality

Classroom Environment, then click on Language and Literacy.

Science: Exploring Seeds

Children do not learn by being told, but rather by making discoveries. It is important to create an environment which is not haphazard, but well organized and thought out to ensure opportunities for discovery are plentiful and meaningful. Set up a science discovery area filled with interesting materials to promote discovery, language, and a sense of wonder at the magic of science.

Begin a study of seeds. Explain to students the seeds you have placed in the science area are not for eating, but for "exploration". Provide an assortment of seeds: unpopped popcorn, walnuts, pecans, acorns, dried beans, large flower seeds (may have to purchase seed packs), birdseed, and a coconut (the largest seed in the world). This is also a great time to change the material in your sensory table by using birdseed, corn or unpopped popcorn. It is also possible to collect seeds from the natural environment. Be cautious of any items which may be poisonous.

Explain to children that some seeds are edible by creating a display of canned corn, peas, beans, bags of popcorn, packs of sunflower seeds. Encourage children to bring from home labels and pictures of edible seeds to help create a classroom display for your science area. Spend time exploring with your children in the science area. You will find many opportunities for collection of assessment data as you encourage conversation and ask open ended questions. A few hands-on activities for your science area could include:

- ◆ Divide a piece of poster board into sections and encourage children to sort and glue seeds to the various sections. This group project will continue for weeks.
- ◆ Each day cut open a variety of fruits/vegetables and place in the science area for children to explore. Provide tweezers for picking out seeds, magnifying glasses for up close looks at the seeds, and bowls for sorting seeds.
- ◆ Place several balancing scales in the area for weighing the heavier nuts such as walnuts, pecans, and hazelnuts.

- ◆ Create vocabulary cards by laminating seed packs onto index cards. Provide a blank "Seed Book" and encourage children to create pages in the book by copying the name of the seed from the vocabulary card and draw a picture of the fruit/vegetable or flower that grows from the seed.
- ◆ Have several of the same vocabulary cards (with pictures) and encourage children to match the like cards.
- ◆ Plant an avocado seed which will provide observation opportunities throughout the year. Take pictures at various stages and post in the science area.
- ◆ Provide egg cartons for sorting seeds.
- ◆ Read children's literature books about seeds, place these books in the science area along with sequencing cards depicting the stories.
- ◆ Grow lima bean seeds in zip top bags. Take photos of the growth and post. Children could use magnifying glasses to observe roots, stems, etc.
- ◆ Soak large lima beans overnight. Open gently and place on a tray so that children can observe the inside with magnifying glasses.
- ◆ Sprouting lentils is a very easy process. Use a shallow tray and provide eyedroppers and water so that children can care for the new growth.
- ◆ This is the best time of the year to place a birdfeeder outside your classroom window and keep it filled with seed. Create excitement around observing the various birds which come to visit. Bird books next to the window will encourage and support the interest and curiosity of your children.

Websites which provide a list of books to read and place in the science area:

<http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/picturebooks/tp/garden.htm>

<http://missrumphiuseffect.blogspot.com/2007/03/seeds-and-growing-things.html>

Social Studies

Children begin exploring their world from the time they are born. As four-year-olds develop, they become more aware of similarities and differences among people, and focus mostly on how people are different or the same as themselves.

Pre-K children are encountering diversity when they learn about different characteristics of families and family structures.

Talk to the children about how there are different types of family structures and that all families have some similarities, not all families are alike. It is important to provide opportunities for children to make friends with people who are different from them.

Here are two activities that you can plan in your class to get children to share more about their families and learn more about each other. Children will begin to make connections that although each family is different there are some things that all families do.

- 1) Have children bring in photographs of their family members and share what kinds of things they do together as a family. Make a graph of the number of family members in each child's family.
- 2) Tape different sounds heard around the house daily. Some examples are brushing teeth, telephone ringing, doorbell, water running, alarm clock, etc. Play the tape for children to identify the sound.

Math

It is possible for children to enjoy mathematics! Math can be fun and part of the entire Pre-K day.

The following Math activities can be easily integrated throughout the day. Remember, children learn by doing - by moving, manipulating, touching, tasting, feeling, and seeing. Make math fun!

- Snack time is math time when you serve crackers in a variety of shapes. Look for crackers in squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles. Serve all the shapes at once, then have fun. Can you make a cracker pattern? Can someone else at your table repeat it? Do you have more circles than squares? Which shape is biggest?
- Look at the store ads or coupons for pictures of all the cylinders (cans) or cubes (boxes) you can find. What are their different uses? Paste the pictures on paper and make a book of shapes.
- Play with puzzles and shape blocks. These are great "hands-on" activities that help children understand spatial concepts. (Dominoes, Jenga, GeoShapes, etc.) If the child is not old enough to understand all the rules, make up your own versions that match his/her ability.
- Help children measure time by playing "Beat the Clock" as they work on daily activities. Use a timer or hourglass as they clean up or get ready for lunch.
- Ask questions to get children thinking! Ask questions about sequence; What comes first? What comes next? What comes last? Ask things like, "Why do you suppose that happened? "What makes you think so?" What other way could we do this?"
- Talk about units of measure. You don't even have to have a ruler. A child's hand, foot, or even a toy can be used to measure distance. For example, how many shoe lengths are between the slide and the swing set on the playground.
 - Don't forget that children's books can pose interesting problems, prepare children for mathematical concepts, and provide teaching opportunities.

CLASS

Georgia's Pre-K program continues to implement the CLASS instrument in a third of the classrooms across the state. This month we will focus on the dimension of Concept Development under the domain of Instructional Support. According to the state and national averages, concept development is an area of needed growth for most teachers.

Concept development focuses on the way a teacher makes learning conceptual and facilitates a broader understanding of ideas, rather than using rote instruction and basic recall. Effective concept development provides students with opportunities to be creative through generating their own ideas and products, and encourages them to use analysis and reasoning in approaches to problems. There are several ways to provide effective and appropriate concept development. Encourage children to use instructional strategies that concentrate on critical thinking skills, such as compare/contrast, sequencing, and problem solving. Ask questions that are

Also consider applying concepts to real world applications. For example, if you are teaching sequencing, have the children give the steps to washing hands. When examples from children's lives are used, connections are made and they are more likely to retain the information.

Finally encourage children to be creative through exploring a variety of open-ended materials and using them in various ways. For example, children may use large hollow blocks to create a castle in the block center, but the following day they use the same blocks along with wrapping paper to make pretend gifts in dramatic play.

Continue to look for more exciting news about the CLASS each month. For more information, visit www.classobservation.com.

Assessment

Returning teachers, we are half way through the first assessment period. If you started school in August you should have completed two cycles of the evaluation process on your developmental checklist or spreadsheet. If you are using WSO this will take place online. Remember, there will be indicators that have not been assessed. Plan to address these items throughout your lesson plans. Example: If you are lacking data in math, plan small group activities around math and develop a matrix to gather the information. Keep in mind by the end of the semester you should have all indicators assessed and documented.

The children's portfolios should be filling up. Make sure you have a balance of documentation. If you are using WSO check your online portfolios to ensure you have a balance of documentation.